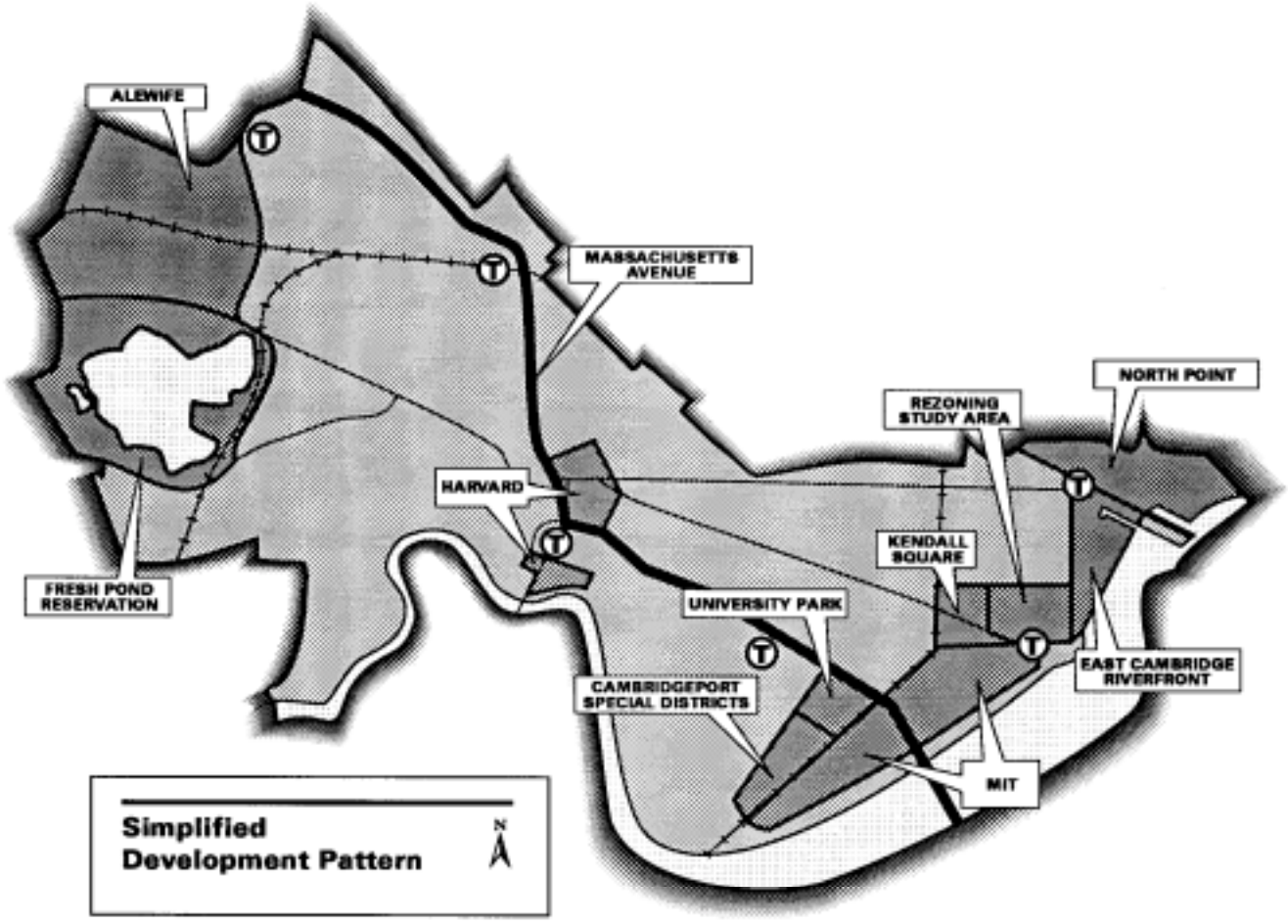
Part II.
Planning Assumptions and Policies

Whenever a public decision is made, an analytical process generally has preceded that decision providing the factual and theoretical context within which the policy choices are weighed and considered. Each planning effort is inevitably built upon the information gathered and past experience as well as upon the adopted policy.

What follows is an enumeration of the planning assumptions which have provided the context within which the Planning Board has developed its policy recommendations over the past decade. The assumptions may be ones of fact, as the Planning Board understands them, which limit or direct the choices the city may make with regard to its development. Other assumptions may take the form of policy directions which appear to have been adopted by the City explicitly or are implied in actions taken by the City in other matters and at other times. These assumed facts and principles are presented for functional areas particularly pertinent to land use planning concerns; also provided is some discussion of their origins and implications.

The planning assumptions are followed by a compilation of the policies for each functional area. These policies, which will help guide the Planning Board and others in future planning decisions and recommendations, reflect the changing context of our city and our planning assumptions. The policies are discussed and explained in the accompanying commentary for each functional area.


ALEWIFE
MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
NORTH POINT
REZONING STUDY AREA
HARVARD
KENDALL SQUARE
FRESH POND RESERVATION
UNIVERSITY PARK
EAST CAMBRIDGE RIVERFRONT
CAMBRIDGEPORT SPECIAL DISTRICTS
MIT
Simplified Development Pattern
N

6. Land Use

The complexity of the city's land use pattern is a significant aspect of its appeal. How to regulate the evolution of that pattern in the future will require a number of critical policy choices affecting a wide range of issues and concerns that may be in conflict.

Assumptions

> *The diversity of the city's development pattern is a major asset and should be fostered and protected.*

> *The close proximity of a wide variety of uses and activities requires careful consideration of buffer and transition requirements.*

> *The wide diversity of land use in the city fosters the social and economic diversity that is one of Cambridge's enduring assets.*

The city's historic development pattern, established long before the influence of the automobile, provides an intricate mosaic of land uses, scales, densities and activities that are evident to anyone who moves through the city. The often lamented complexity of the zoning map is, in part, a reflection of that intricate pattern and of the policy choice, through zoning, to reflect the physical and use diversity of the city's many neighborhoods and commercial districts.

In Cambridge, many successful and stimulating juxtapositions of differing uses and scales can be found within the same general use category: the old multi-story brick apartment buildings in the predominantly wood milieu character of neighborhoods like Mid-Cambridge and Agassiz; or the dense commercial Harvard Square close by the green and lush ambience of the large homes and spacious lots along Brattle Street.

That intricacy, however, also has the potential for very real conflict, particularly as more contemporary building forms and activities replace earlier building types. For example, Massachusetts Avenue between Harvard and Central Squares has many illustrations of how the juxtaposition of very high density commercial uses and low scaled residential neighborhoods has proved more jarring than stimulating. Harvard Street between these same two squares illustrates how the same use -dense multi-family apartment buildings -has a completely different impact when the physical forms change: a 1920s courtyard building is a much more benign neighbor than its 1960s car dependent cousin.

The challenge to the City and its citizens is to recognize in public policy and land use regulation the very real but different problems that such diversity may engender in both existing neighborhoods and emerging new development districts.

Assumption

> New and evolving development areas have the greatest latitude as to character and type of development and offer the potential for innovative and non-traditional mixes of uses and scales of development.

Experience with the city's historic development pattern suggests that diversity in use and building form is a positive aspect of living in Cambridge. That experience is appropriately applied in the newly emerging development areas where all aspects of use, density, and scale are much less constrained by existing development patterns.

This drawing illustrates the potential for a completely new environment in North Point, the 70 acres of land in the extreme northeast corner of Cambridge. The viability of housing, hotel, and office development in this area was thrown into question by the Scheme Z ramp design for the Central Artery. Even though a more acceptable design is now being created, many steps remain to be taken before this mixed-use vision can be realized.

Given the increasingly important need to mediate between potentially competing public objectives - housing, jobs, environmental quality, and tax revenue - the flexibility found in these newly emerging development areas should not be unnecessarily constrained by a rigid policy that would impose the historic development patterns of adjacent neighborhoods on them. Greater flexibility as to form, use, and density is appropriate in these emerging districts, subject to the careful consideration of the impacts on the adjacent established neighborhoods. The opportunity to carefully fashion detailed plans, and zoning mechanisms to implement them, suggests that a wider range of options and choices would best serve all residents and help strike a balance between the multiple objectives that must find partial realization through the City's land use policies.

Assumptions

> *By the nature of its rather fixed development pattern and the evolution of the characteristics of some contemporary land uses, Cambridge is not an appropriate location for all kinds of development or specific uses. Within the city some uses may be appropriately located in some areas and not in others.*

> *The city's past development pattern sets limits on the kinds, scale and, ultimately, amount of development that can reasonably be accommodated without significant harm to the character and environmental quality of the city;*

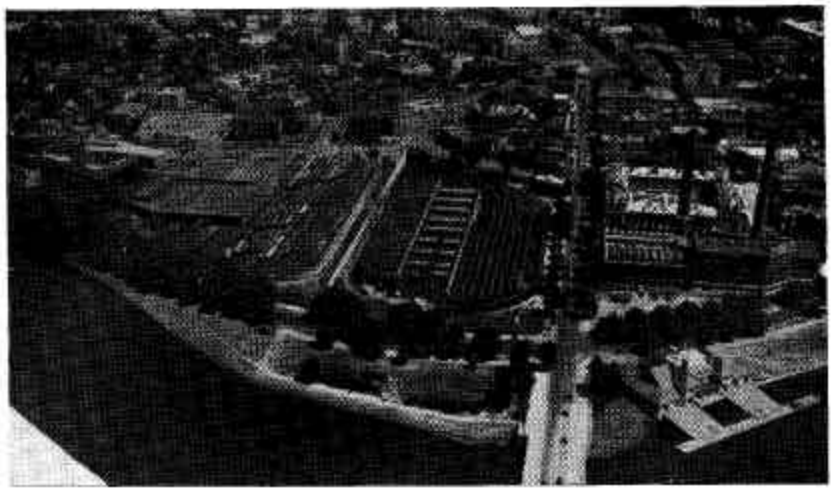
> *As the city's physical fabric changes over time, the evolving mix of uses and activities should be balanced to minimize the negative impacts of change on the community while advancing its multiple land use policy objectives.*

Cambridge is clearly not a clean slate upon which any new form of urban development can be written or upon which writing can occur forever, without limit. History and tradition have conspired to produce an urban environment that most feel is particularly pleasing. The pleasure is derived, in part, from a physical environment that has certain, irreducible characteristics that while often difficult to define specifically, nevertheless exist. The city is not infinitely flexible or accommodating; while the limits may vary from place to place, a recognition that limits do exist is helpful when policy choices have to be made. For instance, with the approval of several large redevelopment schemes in Harvard Square in the 1980s, the remaining opportunities for additional large scale development there are diminishing rapidly. Continuing the trends of the past decade into the future would clearly redefine the character of the Square and squander its special appeal (for many, indeed, this outcome has clearly already been

realized; definitions themselves are subject to considerable debate). The City has recognized the validity of limits in its adoption of downzonings in residential neighborhoods for more than fifteen years.

More specifically, the growing dependence on or desire for accommodation to the automobile on the part of many companies, their customers and employees makes some activities, where that dependence is irreducible, very difficult to integrate into the city's physical structure without completely transforming it. A variation on this theme is found in general office use where the density of employee population can generate very high peak hour traffic when the employees are car dependent. Such a use can be accommodated when it is limited to those areas of the city where public transit can provide options to the private auto.

Some uses, such as warehouse or distribution centers which are heavily dependent on industrial grade truck delivery and distribution systems, may have no appropriate location in the future in Cambridge.



The Red Line maintenance facility shown in the 1927 aerial photograph gave way in the 1980s to the JFK memorial park on the Charles River, with the JFK School of Government and the Charles Square mixed-use complex to the north.

Land Use Policies

The City's land use policies provide an overall framework within which the policies in other functional areas will present a more detailed picture.

Land Use Pattern and Neighborhood Protection

Fundamental to setting a growth policy direction for the future for Cambridge is clarity on the cluster of issues addressing how much change, if any, is acceptable in the built character of the city's long established residential neighborhoods, and commercial squares and corridors.

With some limited but significant exceptions, the distribution of residential and nonresidential areas in the city has not changed significantly since the early part of this century when the city's development matured after a period of rapid industrialization. Zoning; since its adoption in 1924, has tended to confirm and stabilize that general distribution of uses.

Beginning in the 1960s that balance began to shift somewhat, particularly with regard to institutional expansion. A more important, or at least more pervasive shift in the character of some residential neighborhoods and commercial squares was prompted by a change in City policy which envisioned these areas as growth centers appropriate for private or public redevelopment to more intensive, revenue producing uses.

The tall buildings and more intensive site development which ensued from that policy produced a reaction in the 1970s and 1980s. In those decades the physical stability of residential and commercial neighborhoods came to be valued more than their potential to be sources of revenue. That

viewpoint has continued into the present decade with a forthright recognition that there are resulting consequences for other public objectives: namely, that the need for new housing, especially affordable housing, and for new sources of revenue for the most part must be met elsewhere or through creative ways which do not involve wholesale transformations of the city's core neighborhoods. This two-decade old trend in public policy is made explicit in the land use policies presented in this document.

The city's neighborhoods, in all their physical variety, provide decent living environments not in need of redevelopment; nor should they be sacrificed to more intense development in pursuit of other, perhaps legitimate, public objectives.

POLICY 1

Existing residential neighborhoods, or any portions of a neighborhood having an identifiable and consistent built character, should be maintained at their prevailing pattern of development and building density and scale.

Policy 1 is meant to recognize the inherent value of the city's many neighborhoods as they have developed physically; it is not meant to suggest that these places should not change. Strict preservation is the province of historic or conservation districts. While retention of existing structures is encouraged, new construction is anticipated and at times perhaps desirable.

The policy is intended to recognize the general, prevailing character of a neighborhood or portion of a neighborhood: the density of buildings, the density of dwelling units, the prevailing character of setbacks, open space and the way that open space is landscaped. Even in fairly uniformly developed neighborhoods there can be a great variety of building types and development patterns but the character the policy seeks to identify is the prevailing one, not the dense anomalies.

Acceptable change, consistent with the policy, would allow clearly deteriorated or excessively dense environments to be modified or removed.

Conversely, the policy does not imply that all or any particular neighborhood should be forced into unreasonable uniformity; the odd high-density brick apartment building should not be removed because it does not conform to the general wood-framed, two-family character of a place.

Finally, Policy 1 is not intended to foreclose opportunities for reasonable incentives to provide affordable housing, as for example, increasing the density of units within an existing building above that prevailing in the area or permitted by zoning when affordable units are the clear compensating benefit.

POLICY 2

Except in evolving industrial areas, the city's existing land use structure and the area of residential and commercial neighborhoods should remain essentially as they have developed historically.

The city's pattern of residential neighborhoods and commercial squares and corridors has evolved over time into a complex weave of land use that is well balanced and mutually supportive. Policy 2 suggests that a fundamental change in this pattern, through expansion of commercial areas into established residential neighborhoods, or significant erosion of commercial corridors and squares through residential expansion, is not anticipated, not encouraged, and not desired.

This land use pattern is fairly accurately reflected on the City's adopted zoning map. However, consistent with the policy, that map might be adjusted locally where the zoning designation does not accurately reflect existing and desired land use conditions. Nevertheless, no wholesale changes are expected.

The complexity of the city's development pattern, whether in scale and density or use, is desirable and should be encouraged or retained. No particular neighborhood or sub-neighborhood, however, should be expected to exhibit the whole range of differences present in the city, as a whole.

Where a special positive character exists it should be reinforced; conversely, physical diversity for its own sake and beyond defined limits, when it brings in its train negative impacts or mean environments, should not be pursued.

POLICY 3

The wide diversity of development patterns, uses, scales, and densities present within the city's many residential and commercial districts should be retained and strengthened. That diversity should be between and among the various districts, not necessarily within each individual one.

It is appropriate that the City's zoning regulations should recognize and sustain those positive differences but Policy 3 does not preclude physical expansion within the limits set by the applicable zoning district regulations.

In the city's commercial districts particularly, the variety of functions and patterns -from downtown to neighborhood crossroads; from high density, high-rise and low-rise districts to one-story commercial strips; from squares serving the region to the local tailor shop -should be reflected in the zoning ordinance and other City policy; some modest adjustments in regulations, as for uses, heights and densities, can be expected but the general range should remain and be strengthened.

In a city of Cambridge's density and land use complexity, residential uses in particular require protection from abutting nonresidential activity. Policy 4 suggests that minimal transition standards should apply in all areas where residential and other uses abut. Noise, visual clutter, shadows, glare, building scale and site activity should all be considered.

POLICY 4

Adequate transitions and buffers between differing scales of development and differing uses should be provided; general provisions for screening, landscaping and setbacks should be imposed while in especially complex circumstances special transition provisions should be developed.

Similar uses, including residential uses, at differing scales should also be subject to transition requirements. In some cases uses themselves might be used as a transition mechanism: as for example, office use between residential and retail or industrial activities.

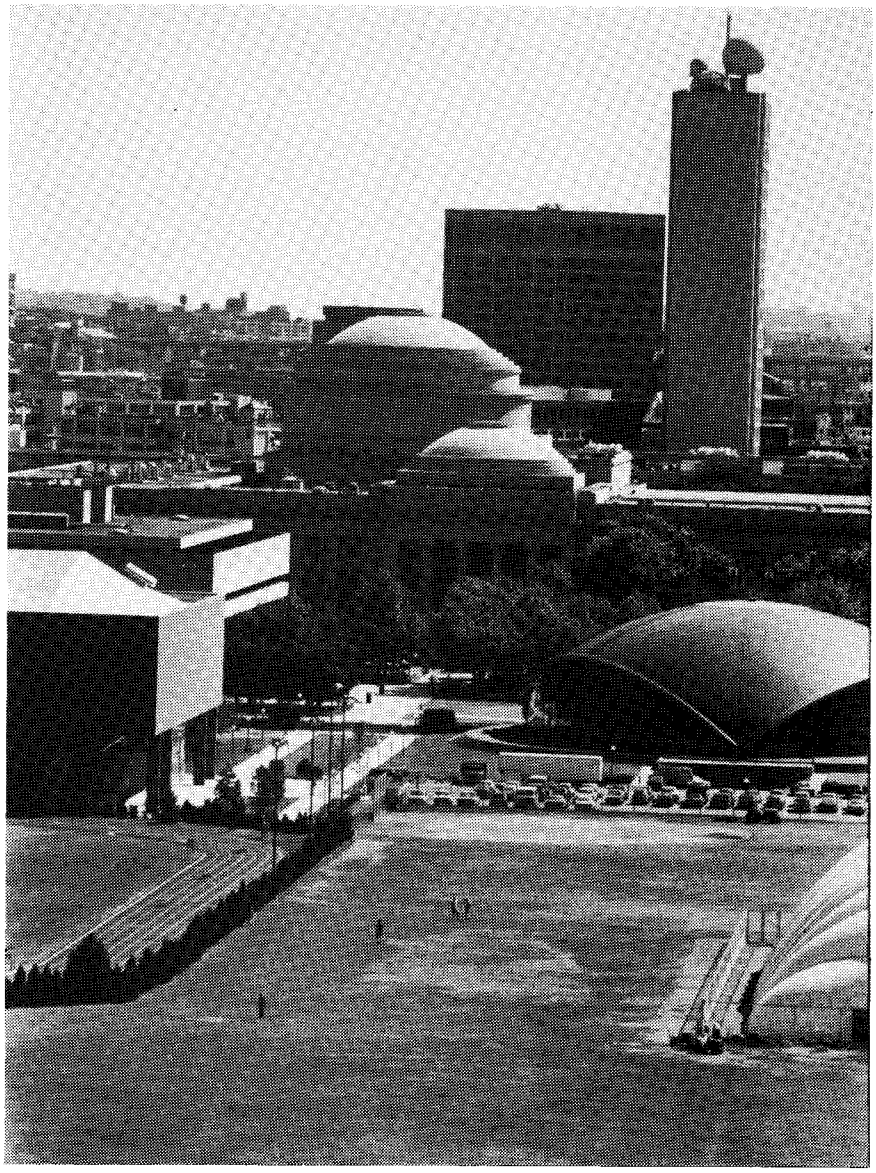
Institutional Land Use

Central to any discussion of the future of the City of Cambridge is the need for a clear understanding of the expected or anticipated physical relationship of the city's major educational and medical institutions to its business districts and residential neighborhoods.

While a presence in the city for three hundred years, institutions, as a category of land use, began to have a particularly significant impact on the city's physical fabric in the 1960s with the dramatic growth of the education industry. Partly in response to the pressure of that growth some of the City's regulatory standards were made more liberal; in 1961 major changes in the zoning ordinance were adopted that were intended, or had the effect, of facilitating the growth and expansion of the city's institutional centers. Much high-density institutional development was planned and significant elements of it were constructed in the succeeding years.

POLICY 5

The major institutions, principally Lesley College, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the hospitals, should be limited to those areas that historically have been occupied by such uses and to abutting areas that are reasonably suited to institutional expansion, as indicated by any institutional overlay district formally adopted by the City.



Where actual physical construction did not occur institutional uses often expanded deep into established residential neighborhoods. In those years the City was prohibited by state law from regulating such uses in its residential communities.

After witnessing two decades of such expansion, the City acquired state authority to control institutional uses in its principal residential areas. In adopting regulations in 1981, the City established a de facto incentive for institutions to expand into adjacent industrial and commercial districts.

The stage has been set now in the early 1990s for a further reassessment of the relationship of the city's institutions to public policy regarding physical change in the future. Clearly that relationship is very complex.

POLICY 6

For such institutions reasonable densities should be permitted in their core campuses to forestall unnecessary expansion into both commercial districts and low-density residential neighborhoods.

Hospitals, the city's major noneducational institutions, provide vital direct services to Cambridge residents; on the other hand their physical expansion can severely impact adjacent residential neighborhoods when sites are constrained.

Institutions are important employment centers which are not subject to the vagaries of economic cycles as commercial uses are; alternately they may ignore the constraints of the marketplace to the potential disadvantage of the city.

Universities take property off the tax rolls, but may make in lieu of tax payments to the City treasury; they remove tax paying commercial properties at critical locations from the tax rolls but also construct new tax paying developments and impart added value to the private residential and commercial communities that surround them; they place demands on the city's housing supply but construct affiliate housing when the private market might not.

As the universities grow, their cultural, social and political impact inevitably increases (as for instance approaching the 20% ownership

Holyoke Center, with its ground floor retail and university administrative offices above, combines business and institutional uses in one complex.

threshold which could enhance their influence on city-wide zoning efforts). At a more local level they can come to control the character of a given locality, as in Harvard Square, with potentially quite benign results. But university policies affecting such important community values are always subject to the changing priorities of the individuals and administrations that establish institutional policy, often beyond the control of the City or its residents.

It is understood that the campuses of the city's major institutions cannot grow without limit. At some point unlimited growth would produce an institutional presence that would dominate the community to the detriment of the social, physical, and economic diversity that characterizes Cambridge today. While that circumstance does not prevail now, and it probably can't be defined with satisfactory precision, the always changing relationship between the city and its institutions requires continual monitoring and appraisal to ensure that both evolve in a harmonious and balanced way.

Institutions' impact on the city is various and complex but even small physical additions and changes can be felt keenly at the neighborhood level. Policies 5 and 6 recommend that, all other considerations being equal, any additions to the large institutions' physical plant occur within their existing campuses, using existing facilities more intensively or adding new facilities on appropriate vacant sites. However, any more intensive use of the existing campus facilities should occur where it will have the least external impact on adjacent residential communities and will do the least harm to those campus features, like open space and historic buildings, that are of value to the entire community .

Nevertheless, there is a limit to the amount of additional development that can occur within core campuses before the desirable goal of allowing institutions to adapt and respond to changing academic trends is outweighed by the losses sustained by the larger community when values shared by all are compromised. In this regard the Residence C-2 and C-3 zoning districts, which regulate much of the development on the core campuses, are meant to provide flexibility; they are not meant to imply a City policy that the campuses should always be built to those zones' full development potential. Recognizing that fact, some refinement of the regulations of the district might be appropriate, as for instance a height limit in the Residence C-3 zone, to more precisely define the bounds beyond which physical change is clearly inappropriate from the city's point of view.

The City has developed a series of institutional overlay districts which define those areas in Cambridge which are most suitable for concentrations of institutional use. Those districts encompass the core campuses as well as adjacent lower density areas where some expansion into abutting neighborhoods might be appropriate. They also identify some adjacent commercial areas the City has identified as locations for limited institutional expansion, although the City has no authority to control those uses there.

POLICY 7

Notwithstanding the limitations implied in the above policy statements, (1) the establishment of a new center of tax-exempt, institutional activity may be appropriate in one or more of the city's evolving industrial areas and/or (2) the development of a modest and discreet institutional presence may be appropriate in any nonresidential district when a combination of two or more of the following benefits accrue to the city:

1. Such action will permanently forestall excessive development at the core campus of an existing institution, in particularly sensitive locations; or

2. Existing institutional activity in a core campus area will be reduced or eliminated, particularly at locations where conflict with existing residential communities has been evident or is possible in the future; and

3. The potential for future commercial, tax paying development is not significantly reduced; or

4. The presence of a stable, well managed institutional activity could encourage, stimulate, and attract increased investment in non institutional commercial tax producing development.

Policy 7 1eaves open the possibility that development of satellite institutional use clusters, in less sensitive locations, may be a preferred alternative to increased development at the main campuses or to expansion into adjacent areas, and may be, fro m a city perspective, a positive catalyst for changes in economic outlook that is encouraged by the City.

Nonresidential Districts and Evolving Industrial Areas

The effectiveness of many policies presented in this document will depend on the skill with which the issues centering on the amount and scale of development and the mix of uses which should be encouraged in the city's evolving industrial areas are addressed.

These areas were the principal setting for the new housing and commercial development occurring in the city in the boom years of the 1980s. Some of the tallest new buildings and densest development occurred here. These districts harbor the greatest potential for new development in the future. As a result, these areas will be the source of much of the city's new revenue in future years.

At the same time these industrial districts remain the setting for much older, low-density industrial buildings suitable for the start-up enterprises which have fueled the Cambridge economy in the last half of this century.

Despite their relatively large size (the Alewife area alone is more than 300 acres) the opportunities for future redevelopment in these areas are continually diminishing as new development patterns are set, as is the case in Kendall Square and in East Cambridge. And while some of these areas are relatively remote from established neighborhoods, external impacts like increased traffic affect even the most distant neighborhood as physical development proceeds.

With diminishing flexibility comes increasing conflict as the desire for additional housing, new sources of revenue, protected environments for start-up companies and generally improved environmental quality must all be satisfied in an increasingly more limited area.

Policy 8 is not meant to define the appropriate maxi mum densities that should be permitted in the city (most of the city is now well above the threshold above which modes of travel other than the single occupancy vehicle can be effectively developed). Rather the policy suggests that the most dense development should reflect the availability of transit services. Conversely, the availability of transit services should not mandate that the maximum development density be allowed as other policy objectives may playa more significant role.

POLICY 8

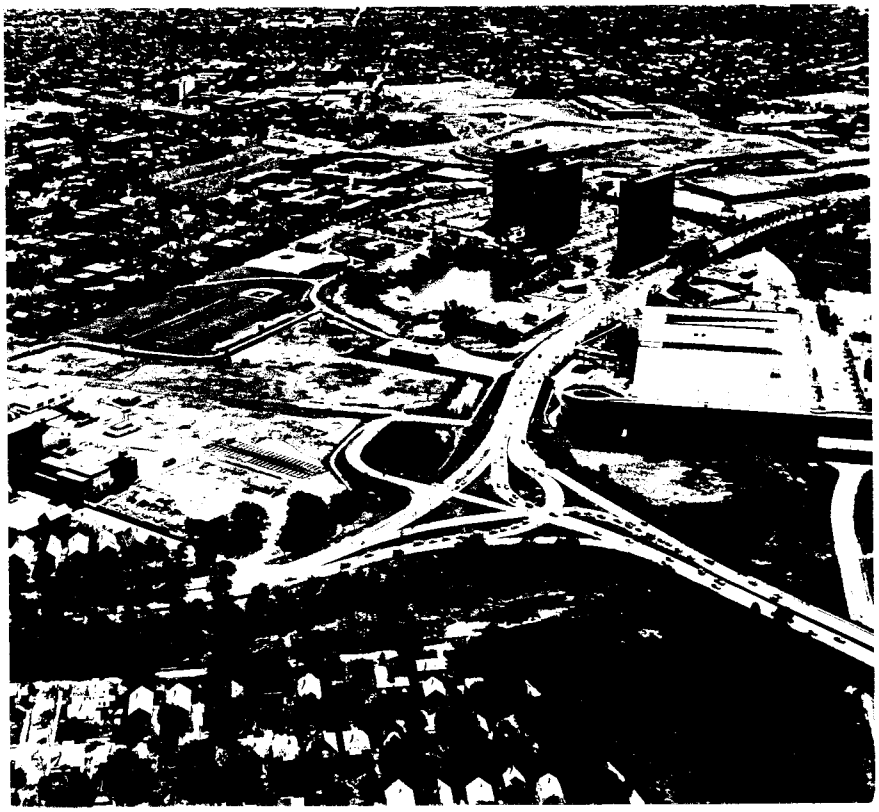
The availability of transit services should be a major determinant of the scale of development and the mix of uses encouraged and permitted in the predominantly nonresidential districts of the city: the highest density commercial uses are best located where transit service is most extensive (rapid transit and trolley); much reduced commercial densities and an increased proportion of housing use are appropriate where dependence on the automobile is greatest; mixed uses, including retail activities in industrial and office districts, should be considered to reduce the need to use the automobile during working hours. Similarly, the scale, frequency, mode and character of goods delivery should play an important role in determining the appropriate density of nonresidential uses anywhere in the city.

While the Planning Board has come to believe that the maximum desirable density in the city, regardless of circumstances and transit availability, should be established at a Floor Area Ratio of 3.0, the most appropriate density at any given location will depend on a variety of factors in addition to transit service. Residential uses may be more acceptable at a higher density at any given location than general office use; conversely general office use at the highest density may be appropriate only when in close proximity to transit service.

Policies 9,10 and 11 do not suggest the specific range of densities, scale and heights that are appropriate; those factors will vary from location to location and should be determined by the circumstances prevailing

POLICY 9

The evolution of the city's industrial areas should be encouraged, under the guidance of specific urban design plans, and through other public policy and regulations such that:
1. Those areas can adapt to new commercial and industrial patterns of development;
2. The residential neighborhood edges abutting such areas are strengthened through selective residential reuse within the development areas or through careful transition in density, scale and lot development pattern;
3. New uses and varied scales and densities can be introduced into such areas;
4. Uses incompatible with the city's existing and future desired development pattern are phased out.



at particular locations and after detailed analysis. The diversity suggested need not be repeated at every location within every evolving industrial area. That objective should be achieved as an outcome for the city as a whole.

The city's multiple objectives -in finance, job creation, urban design, adaptability to changing economic circumstances, and housing inventory expansion -are most easily accommodated in these industrial areas with the fewest conflicts and compromises. However, the space resource is not unlimited. Therefore, these many demands require careful planning and an urban design framework to guide future physical changes to achieve the maximum benefits to the city .

POLICY 10

In some evolving industrial areas multiple uses should be encouraged, including an important component of residential use in suitable locations not subject to conflict with desired industrial uses, to advance other development policy objectives of the city:

1. To provide opportunities for those who work in the city to live here;

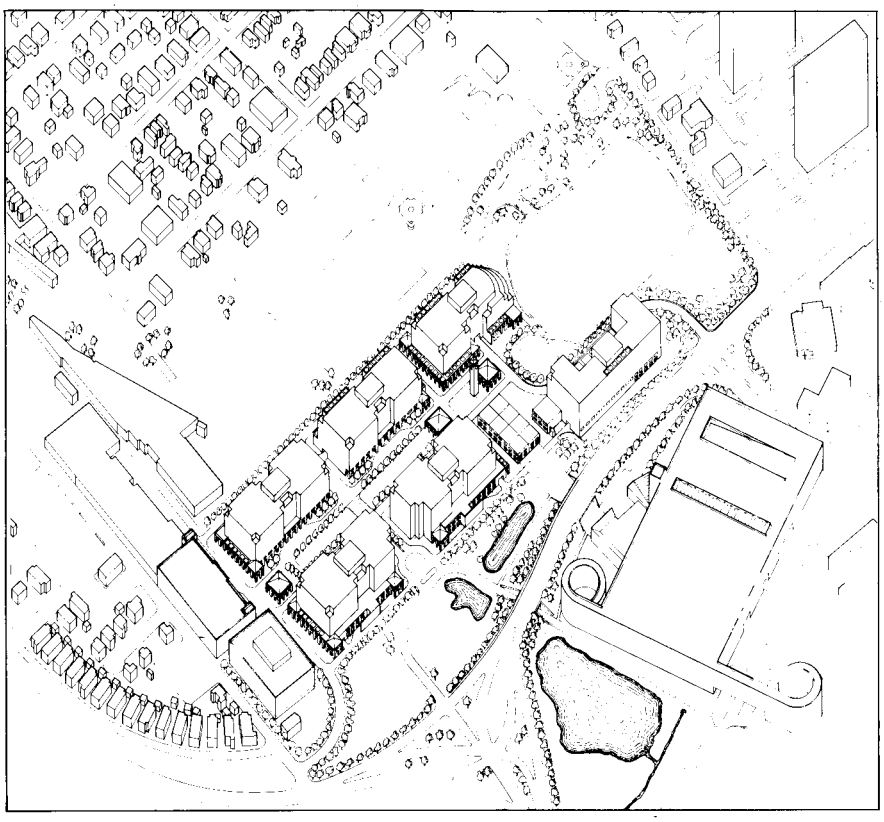
2. To limit the use of the automobile to get to Cambridge and to travel within Cambridge;

3. To encourage more active use of all parts of the city for longer periods throughout the day; and

4. To limit the secondary impacts of new development on the existing, established neighborhoods. These impacts may be both economic, as in the increased demand placed on the limited stock of existing housing, and environmental, as in the increase in traffic on neighborhood streets.

POLICY 11

A wide range of development patterns should be encouraged in these evolving industrial areas at scales and densities and in forms which would be difficult to accommodate in the city's fully developed districts and neighborhoods.



The Alewife Center plan for the former W.R. Grace site is designed to incorporate an entry to Alewife Station with a variety of buildings for office, hotel, and retail use.

Special Uses and Environments

Policy 12 recognizes that the quality of life in a future Cambridge will be influenced by the way difficult but necessary uses or environments are accommodated or regulated. Similarly, that quality of life may change if fragile environments do not receive the specialized attention they require for survival.

Certain necessary uses, like gas stations and car repair facilities and low-cost industrial space for start-up companies, have lost ground to more intensive and/or financially more profitable land development in the past. In addition such uses frequently produce environments which are unpleasant or unattractive as neighbors to residential uses. As a result those activities are frequently excluded from the list of permitted uses during rezonings without full appreciation of the long-term implications. Or, as is the case of low-cost industrial space, natural market forces frequently hasten their demise when their special requirements are not recognized.

On the other hand, widely acknowledged quality environments that are clear assets to all residents of the city lose some of their character and value to the community when only the standard zoning' controls are applied and their requirements are also not understood.

POLICY 12

Those necessary or desirable uses and activities which require specially tailored environments should be provided for and those uses, activities and development patterns which create distinctive environments that serve as amenities for the whole community should be protected or maintained. For example: low-rent industrial space for start-up enterprises; locations for industrial use and development which could be compromised by proximity to other, incompatible, uses, including residential uses; small commercial enclaves which directly serve their immediate surrounding residential neighborhood; locations appropriate for gas stations, car repair facilities, tow yards, etc.; structures or clusters of structures eligible for local historic district designation; or for designation as a local conservation district; environments, as frequently found in the Residence "A" districts, where a unique combination of distinctive architecture and landscaped open space prevails; areas designated or eligible as national register historic districts.

Pace of Development and Limits to Total Development

No more vexing issue complicates the policy choices to be made for the future of Cambridge than that of defining the appropriate amount, pace and circumstances of future development in the city .

The rate of commercial development in the decade of the 1980s was nine times the rate for the preceding two decades. With that new development, combined with the adoption of classification, the burden of the property tax levy was shifted dramatically over the decade from residential property owners to commercial rate payers.

The new development of the 1980s provides a significant proportion of the current local tax levy; upwards of 500,000 square feet of new development or substantial rehabilitation of existing facilities might be required in succeeding years to maintain the level of services now provided by the City, within the constraints of Proposition 2 112, in the absence of additional revenue sources to the City.

Many areas of the City could be dramatically improved from a design or urban design perspective with additional construction.

Desirable construction from that perspective, however, might not be acceptable unless other considerations, such as auto traffic and congestion and increased demand on the city's infrastructure, are adequately addressed.

The decade just past witnessed much increase in traffic in the city, as well as increased disruption due to new construction. On numerous public occasions, citizens have expressed annoyance with the lack of resident parking in neighborhoods and dislike of taller and denser buildings. Many of the complaints articulated can be tied to the obvious construction which took place during the decade. Others, however, are less easily assigned to local circumstances as the region as a whole also underwent dramatic changes during that same period. The city must be cautious in extrapolating the experiences of the past ten years into the future lest future choices be unnecessarily constrained by outmoded objectives and shifting priorities.

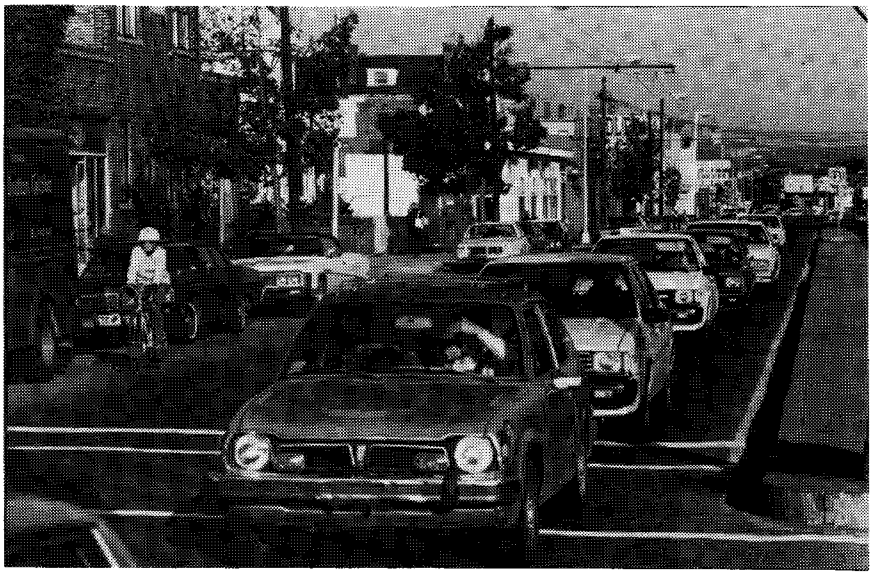
POLICY 13

A pace of development or redevelopment should be encouraged that permits the maintenance of a healthy tax base, allows for adjustment and adaptation to changing economic conditions, and is consistent with the City's urban design and other physical development objectives yet does not unreasonably disrupt the daily activities of the city's neighborhoods and residents or overburden the city's water and sewer infrastructure.

Policy 13 suggests that the pace at which change occurs in the physical environment of Cambridge may be as significant an issue as any determination of the total amount of development that should be permitted. The actual balance of the multiple objectives that define an acceptable pace of development or an acceptable limit to development will change over time with changing circumstances. However subjectively described, the policy does recognize the legitimate need to define limits to the expansion of the physical environment of Cambridge.

Nevertheless, under present circumstances, the policy assumes that additional development in Cambridge is possible, is desirable, and is necessary when it occurs in forms consistent with the constraints implied by the sum of all the policies proposed in this document. Additional physical development not consistent with those policies or which occurs at a too rapid pace is understood to be, at a minimum, disruptive to the community and, at the extreme, harmful.

Given today's understanding of future development standards, transportation technologies, infrastructure availability , and desired environmental amenities there is a limit to the amount of new development the city can accept; well considered reductions in development potential through rezoning, adopted in the past and likely in the future, reflect that understanding. However, as development standards, transportation technologies, infrastructure availability and standards of acceptable environmental amenities change and evolve in the future, in ways that cannot be imagined today, so to does the assessment of what is or is not an acceptable level of development. While it would appear to be seductively simple to define "pace" and "limit" with arithmetic precision, in reality those notions are more ambiguous than arithmetic and perhaps more useful as concepts whose validity is accepted and which are employed as evolving circumstances are continually assessed in the daily business of making planning choices.



Constraints on the available options to finance local government, and the constraints specifically imposed by Proposition 2 112, militate against good physical planning; they bias local decisions in favor of physical growth as a financial rather than a physical or environmental planning issue and severely limit the practical planning choices the city may make in defining its future. Funding of current City services cannot be maintained within the basic limits of 2 112; new development, however, has provided a legal "end run" around those constraints. Maintenance of the current level of services or their expansion can only be financed by the revenue from new development (laying aside difficult-to-forecast external sources of revenue like grants from state and federal governments, etc., or whole new sources of local income) or through increases in the residential contribution to the revenue stream.

One can easily imagine a point at which painful choices will have to be made: between suffering loss of services, increasing the level of resident financial support of those services, or enduring unacceptable levels of physical development and its ancillary negative impacts of congestion, traffic, and the like. The timing or nature of that choice is best not calculated or predicted by formula; rather, a constantly vigilant and sensitive planning process may be the best means to forestall the choice or minimize its impact.